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S E C R E T RABAT 000215

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DEPT FOR NEA/MAG, PM

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MO](#) [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: SCENSETTER FOR VISIT OF SECDEF RUMSFELD

Classified By: Defense Attache Colonel Solomon for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (c)

¶1. (C) Summary: The US Mission and the Moroccan government warmly welcome your upcoming visit. We believe King Mohammed will see the visit as reinforcement of our solid relationship with Morocco, a relationship the King considers very important. Morocco continues cooperation with us to counter terror, and has indicated it would like to deepen military and security cooperation with the United States. Morocco has been designated a Major Non-NATO Ally (June 2004); and in the same month hosted a major, U.S. led multi-national exercise, MAJESTIC EAGLE, using the Cap Draa range. Morocco has also signed a NATO Security agreement, and an Article 98 agreement with the U.S. End Summary.

Bilateral Developments

¶2. (C) In the two years following the May 2003 Casablanca terrorist bombings, the United States has quadrupled non-military assistance to Morocco, doubled military assistance, declared Morocco a Major Non-NATO Ally, concluded and ratified a Free Trade Agreement, hosted visits by the King and PM Jettou to Washington, established naval and legal attach offices at Embassy Rabat, expanded counter-terrorism training and assistance, announced Morocco's Millennium Challenge Account eligibility, conducted large-scale military exercises in Morocco and off its coast, and carried out a series of high level visits to Morocco. In addition, the US provided much appreciated humanitarian assistance in response to both the Al-Hoceima earthquake and a 2005 locust invasion. The US was instrumental, through Presidential Envoy Senator Lugar, in securing the release of the final 404 Moroccan POWs held by the Polisario, in August 2005.

¶3. (C) Most recently, FBI Director Mueller met King Mohammed VI in Rabat on February 7 and discussed counterterrorism cooperation, the opening of the Embassy's FBI office, and the importance of solving the Western Sahara conflict.

Algeria and Western Sahara

¶4. (C) Morocco's relations with Algeria remain sour. The Western Sahara issue remains a key; without a resolution to this long-standing dispute, limited Moroccan resources that could be utilized more productively elsewhere will go to maintaining security in the territory, where roughly two-thirds of the Moroccan army is deployed.

15. (C) While eager for an internationally sanctioned resolution to the dispute, the GOM is not waiting for one to entrench its presence in the territory, "Moroccanizing" the Western Sahara. The government intends to demonstrate to its domestic and international audiences that the Western Sahara can thrive as an autonomous part of the Kingdom.

16. (SBU) We continue to urge Morocco and Algeria to improve their dialogue and avoid negative public rhetoric. We contribute to the annual budget of MINURSO, the peacekeeping force in the territory, and support confidence-building measures such as family visits between Morocco and Polisario-controlled areas. The last American military observers in MINURSO departed in 2003. The largest contingents currently belong to the French, Russians, and Chinese.

Middle East

17. (C) Palestinian President Abbas visited Morocco in May, 2005, and King Mohammed met briefly with Shimon Peres in Madrid earlier in 2005. The Israeli liaison office in Rabat, closed during the second intifada, remains shuttered. Morocco continues to play an active role in bringing together Christian, Islamic, and Jewish religious leaders.

18. (C) On Iraq, the GOM continues to play a discreet but supportive role. However, the GOM has not publicly condemned terrorist attacks in Baghdad in the same way it has condemned attacks elsewhere. Two employees of the Moroccan Embassy in Baghdad are currently being held hostage; there have been strong public statements and demonstrations of support for them and against the kidnappers, from the King and the Moroccan people. Morocco has, at the request of DoD, assigned a liaison officer to CENTCOM HQ in Tampa (and another to JFCOM HQ in Norfolk). The Iraqis have a new Ambassador in Rabat who is visible and active, but there is no Moroccan Ambassador in Baghdad.

Reform

19. (C) Morocco is pressing internal reform on all fronts: in women's rights; in the media; in education; in the economic realm, with FTA implementation and liberalization of the banking/financial sector; and, in the religious sphere, where Morocco's Ministry of Islamic Affairs is restructuring mosques and Islamic education to promote tolerance and moderation. The USG is actively supporting many of these efforts, including through direct (MEPI, ESF and USAID DA) funding. Morocco's Equity & Reconciliation Commission, established to examine human rights abuses between 1956 and 1999, has recently completed its work and submitted its final report to the King, who has decreed that the findings should be made public.

Military Background

10. (C//NF) In recent years, the Moroccans have demonstrated commitment to our military relationship, as well as to supporting US strategic interests abroad. In 2004, they hosted a major exercise, MAJESTIC EAGLE, which included participation from ten NATO countries. They have also hosted US forces at various training exercises, and have provided critical staging, overflight and logistical support for U.S. forces in transit. Post annually processes several hundred aircraft and ship clearances, many at short notice, and not a single U.S. request has been denied. No other country gets that much privilege here, even France.

Cooperation in the War on Terror

11. (C//NF) Moroccan cooperation with the U.S. in countering terrorism continues to be excellent, notably in the areas of intelligence sharing, arrests, border security, and in

restricting terrorist financing. The strength of this law enforcement cooperation was underlined just last week by the visit to Morocco of FBI Director Mueller, who also had an audience with the King. The Royal Moroccan military, which plays a peripheral role in counter-terrorism, signed a "coalition of the willing vision statement" to improve regional cooperation in the Pan-Sahel at the last EUCOM Chiefs of Defense Conference in Stuttgart. Also, the Moroccan Armed Forces, Ministry of Interior and the Gendarmerie respond enthusiastically to our invitations to attend counter-terrorism seminars and education programs associated with the DOD Counter-Terrorism Fellowship, the Marshall Center, and the Near East & South Asia Center at National Defense University.

The Cap Draa (Tan Tan) Range

¶12. (C//NF) Morocco continues to support our joint development of the Cap Draa training area. The site is an exceptional training area because of its size, remoteness, and coastal location which can accommodate naval and amphibious training as well as large-scale ground and air training. A US Naval Construction Battalion participated in an Engineering Exercise with Moroccan Armed Forces engineers during AFRICAN LION 05 (Feb) May 05). They completed two fifty foot range towers, a helicopter landing pad, a trench and bunker area, a small arms range, and a parachute drop zone improvement, as well as improving the beachhead. The next AFRICAN LION is scheduled for May - June, 2006.

International Peacekeeping

¶13. (C//NF) Morocco has been involved in UN PKO since shortly after independence in 1956. Morocco has recently contributed peacekeeping contingents in Bosnia, Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, and Haiti. Morocco has offered to train Iraqi Police and Civil Protection personnel in Morocco.

Military Assistance

¶14. (C//NF) The Moroccans responded very positively to increased Foreign Military Financing (FMF), which, coupled with the continued generous transfers of Excess Defense Articles (EDA), demonstrates our interest and commitment to our military relationship. Much of U.S. FMF is used to buy spare parts for aging equipment. FMF and continued access to EDA play a significant factor in maintaining access to Moroccan bases and training areas and influences Moroccan decision-making in supporting our broader strategic interests.

Engagement Activities

¶15. (C//NF) Morocco became one of the first African countries to participate in EUCOM's Military to Military Contact Program and the State Partnership Program, with the Utah National Guard (UTNG). The UTNG demonstrated great initiative through emergency relief efforts after the Al-Hocima earthquake in Feb 2004. UTNG hosted a visit of 13 Moroccans to Utah in June 2004, and in Feb 2005 Morocco hosted a reciprocal visit. The program was personally approved by the King, and has great support by the state of Utah.

ACSA Agreement

¶16. (C) Morocco is on the verge of signing an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

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